

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF NEVADA

* * *

Matthew Mullins,

Plaintiff,

v.

Samanta Powers, et al.,

Defendants.

Case No. 2:24-cv-00727-APG-DJA

Order

Pro se Plaintiff Matthew Mullins has submitted an application to proceed *in forma pauperis* (ECF No. 1) and a complaint (ECF No. 1-1). Because the Court finds that Plaintiff's application is complete, it grants it. Because Plaintiff's complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, the Court dismisses it without prejudice.

I. *In forma pauperis* application.

Plaintiff filed the forms required to proceed *in forma pauperis* (without paying the filing fee). (ECF No. 1). Plaintiff has shown an inability to prepay fees and costs or give security for them. Accordingly, the application to proceed *in forma pauperis* will be granted under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a). The Court will now screen Plaintiff's complaint.

II. Legal standard for screening.

Upon granting an application to proceed *in forma pauperis*, courts additionally screen the complaint under § 1915(e). Federal courts are given the authority to dismiss a case if the action is legally "frivolous or malicious," fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2). When a court dismisses a complaint under § 1915, the plaintiff should be given leave to amend the complaint with directions as to curing its deficiencies, unless it is clear from the face of the

1 complaint that the deficiencies could not be cured by amendment. *See Cato v. United States*, 70
2 F.3d 1103, 1106 (9th Cir. 1995).

3 Rule 12(b)(6) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure provides for dismissal of a
4 complaint for failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. Review under Rule
5 12(b)(6) is essentially a ruling on a question of law. *See Chappel v. Lab. Corp. of Am.*, 232 F.3d
6 719, 723 (9th Cir. 2000). A properly pled complaint must provide a short and plain statement of
7 the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief. Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2); *Bell Atlantic Corp.*
8 *v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007). Although Rule 8 does not require detailed factual
9 allegations, it demands “more than labels and conclusions” or a “formulaic recitation of the
10 elements of a cause of action.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (citing *Papasan v.*
11 *Allain*, 478 U.S. 265, 286 (1986)). The court must accept as true all well-pled factual allegations
12 contained in the complaint, but the same requirement does not apply to legal conclusions. *Iqbal*,
13 556 U.S. at 679. Mere recitals of the elements of a cause of action, supported only by conclusory
14 allegations, do not suffice. *Id.* at 678. Where the claims in the complaint have not crossed the
15 line from conceivable to plausible, the complaint should be dismissed. *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 570.
16 Allegations of a *pro se* complaint are held to less stringent standards than formal pleadings
17 drafted by lawyers. *Hebbe v. Pliler*, 627 F.3d 338, 342 & n.7 (9th Cir. 2010) (finding that liberal
18 construction of *pro se* pleadings is required after *Twombly* and *Iqbal*).

19 Federal courts are courts of limited jurisdiction and possess only that power authorized by
20 the Constitution and statute. *See Rasul v. Bush*, 542 U.S. 466, 489 (2004). Under 28 U.S.C.
21 § 1331, federal courts have original jurisdiction over “all civil actions arising under the
22 Constitution, laws, or treaties of the United States.” Cases “arise under” federal law either when
23 federal law creates the cause of action or where the vindication of a right under state law
24 necessarily turns on the construction of federal law. *Republican Party of Guam v. Gutierrez*, 277
25 F.3d 1086, 1088-89 (9th Cir. 2002). Whether federal-question jurisdiction exists is based on the
26 “well-pleaded complaint rule,” which provides that “federal jurisdiction exists only when a
27 federal question is presented on the face of the plaintiff’s properly pleaded complaint.”
28 *Caterpillar, Inc. v. Williams*, 482 U.S. 386, 392 (1987). Under 28 U.S.C. § 1332(a), federal

1 district courts have original jurisdiction over civil actions in diversity cases “where the matter in
 2 controversy exceeds the sum or value of \$75,000” and where the matter is between “citizens of
 3 different states.” Generally speaking, diversity jurisdiction exists only where there is “complete
 4 diversity” among the parties; each of the plaintiffs must be a citizen of a different state than each
 5 of the defendants. *Caterpillar Inc. v. Lewis*, 519 U.S. 61, 68 (1996).

6 **III. Screening Plaintiff’s complaint.**

7 Plaintiff sues USAID Director Samantha Powers; District Judge Kent J. Dawson;
 8 “Attorney/Government Official” Joseph Went; and “Attorney/Government Official” Robert
 9 Kinchloe. (ECF No. 1-1 at 2-3). He asserts that he is bringing his claims under *Bivens v. Six*
 10 *Unknown Names Agents of Federal Bureau of Narcotics*, 403 U.S. 388 (1971) and 42 U.S.C.
 11 § 1983. (*Id.* at 3). Plaintiff alleges that the actions underlying his complaint took place from
 12 August 21, 2023 to the present. (*Id.* at 5).

13 Plaintiff alleges that Judge Dawson engaged in judicial misconduct and violated his Fifth
 14 and Fourteenth Amendment Rights. (*Id.* at 6). He alleges that Powers, Kinchloe, and Went
 15 violated his First Amendment rights by engaging in “intimidation, harassment, and unwarranted
 16 surveillance.” (*Id.*). He alleges that Powers, Kinchloe, and Went abused their powers and
 17 corrupted the judicial process. (*Id.*).

18 Plaintiff does not provide factual detail in his complaint beyond these conclusory
 19 allegations. Instead, he refers to an affidavit which he does not attach for a “detailed account” of
 20 his claims. (*Id.*). Without this additional detail, Plaintiff’s claims are too conclusory to state a
 21 claim upon which relief can be granted. Plaintiff does not provide sufficient factual detail
 22 describing what each Defendant did, when, and how those actions violated his rights. The Court
 23 thus dismisses Plaintiff’s complaint without prejudice and with leave to amend.


24
 25 **IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED** that Plaintiff’s application to proceed *in forma*
 26 *pauperis* (ECF No. 1) is **granted**. Plaintiff shall not be required to pre-pay the filing fee.
 27 Plaintiff is permitted to maintain this action to conclusion without the necessity of prepayment of
 28 any additional fees or costs or the giving of security therefor. This order granting leave to

1 proceed *in forma pauperis* shall not extend to the issuance and/or service of subpoenas at
2 government expense.

3 **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the Clerk of Court is kindly directed to file Plaintiff's
4 complaint (ECF No. 1-1) on the docket but shall not issue summons.

5 **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the complaint (ECF No. 1-1) is **dismissed without**
6 **prejudice** for failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, with leave to amend.
7 Plaintiff will have until **June 10, 2024**, to file an amended complaint if the noted deficiencies can
8 be corrected. If Plaintiff chooses to amend the complaint, Plaintiff is informed that the Court
9 cannot refer to a prior pleading (i.e., the original complaint) to make the amended complaint
10 complete. This is because, generally, an amended complaint supersedes the original complaint.
11 Local Rule 15-1(a) requires that an amended complaint be complete without reference to any
12 prior pleading. Once a plaintiff files an amended complaint, the original complaint no longer
13 serves any function in the case. Therefore, in an amended complaint, as in an original complaint,
14 each claim and the involvement of each Defendant must be sufficiently alleged. **Failure to**
15 **comply with this order may result in the recommended dismissal of this case.**

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17 DATED: May 9, 2024

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20 DANIEL J. ALBREGTS
21 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE
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